

## With Love by LadyFrAndrews

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**Summary:**

Steve's letters to Billy over the summer.

& what happens when Billy gets back.

(Mirror/Sequel to Sealed With A Kiss)

## With Love

### Author's Note:

Y'all got me thinking and pondering the what ifs to the whole Steve side of things...so uh, this is what happened because of that.

I hope y'all like it.

X-X-X-X—X-X-X-X-X

Babe,

I hope you know that sometimes I get multiple letters, and not one at a time. Some even come out of order, so I have to wait for details to fill in some blanks.

Please don't stop though! I really like that you take time out of your day to write to me.

I thought you were actually kidding the day before you left last week, when you told me that you were going to write me every day, but I'm kind of glad you meant it. I like getting these little pieces of you since I can't actually have you here.

I'm not so good with words, which you know. You read some of my college application essays, and you even read my English final, and you gave me so much shit for all of it.

Don't tell Max, but Lucas is just as miserable without her. He's turned into Mike when he doesn't get to see Jane on a regular basis. I swear these kids have better luck at finding love than I have in my entire life.

Ma took me shopping for a new "fall wardrobe" for school. Which is pretty much just an updated version of whatever all her posh friends deem appropriate for a young man of my age. Maybe I should've taken you up on that offer to help me define my look. I'm like extra preppy now, babe, it's kind of terrible.

My dad's at least relenting on me not going to his alma matter, he just thinks I'm wasting money and time chasing a degree that has nothing to do with business. Sorry I don't want to follow in his footsteps. He doesn't want to accept that I'm my own person.

Shit, the kids are here. I totally lost track of time, it's Friday, we do a board game night at my place. I get them like ten pizzas, and other stuff their moms would lose their minds over. Maybe not Karen, because let's be honest, she probably wouldn't even notice. Joyce might kick my ass if I don't add some frozen broccoli or something as a option. Claudia loves me though, so I might actually get into trouble with her. Mrs. Sinclair might kick my ass, but Lucas hasn't really been eating, so she might actually be happy that he tends to stuff his face on Fridays.

Later,

-Me

X-X-X-X—X-X-X-X-X

Babe,

You've been gone a month, and you "talk" to me every day. You tell me all about your day, what happened, and the things you did. I'm still here, patiently waiting for you to get back.

Stop focusing on my leaving in a month or so. I'm not leaving without seeing you first.

I have to say, I really like the picture of you and Max at Disneyland. Especially the ears! I taped it up to my mirror so I can see it every day. I smile because of it. You should take me there sometime.

So Karen found out that I went overboard this last Friday. I let the kids have too much soda and ice cream after pizza. Will did tell Joyce that I did microwave some broccoli and put some cheese on it. It came out of a can, which I have no idea how it got to my house. I think Dustin brought it, it was like Easy Cheese. The can was bright and colorful.

I don't know why she complained, I was the one stuck with them all

hopped up on the shit.

I can't believe you wrote about jerking yourself off. Especially in the living room! But to answer your questions, yes. To all of them. Of course I think about you, and say your name.

My dad surprised me, got me a solo dorm. Said it's so I don't have so many distractions.

Mrs. Sinclair unleashed Erica on me. I was not prepared for her sass, but you would absolutely love her. She will take none of your shit. I'm terrified of her.

It's part of the new Friday Night Deal. She reports to all the moms about what was served, when everyone went to bed, and whatever else she deems important enough to tell all their moms.

Joyce thinks its funny.

Claudia tells me doing this just adds to my loveliness. Her brownies are divine, and no, I will not share them with you when you get back. Yeah right, I can never tell you no.

Karen was behind the new Friday Night Deal. Mike didn't talk to her for three days afterwards.

Lucas is better now that Max actually wrote him a few times. He thought she was going to find someone out in California.

To be honest, it's been a nagging thought in the back of my mind too.

I love you, you know. A lot.

I've never felt this way about anyone.

Not even Nancy.

Fuck, just for you, I'll write the stupid words—I MISS YOU TOO.

There I said it.

Yours,

-Me

X-X-X-X—X-X-X-X-X

Baby,

I am so sorry to hear about your grandpa.

I wish I knew more to say than that but you know I'm awful with words.

You'd give me your mom's ring? The one from your necklace?

I'm sorry about your grandma too. You didn't get to meet her either. I'm sorry. She sounded like a pretty great woman.

Of course I want to spend the rest of my life with you! I'm capable of making plans for the long term.

I don't know if I should be offended by the fact that you presume that I won't know you're trying to propose with some elaborate thing you never do for me on a regular basis.

Or that you think I wouldn't ask you to marry me.

No, you're right. It'd be you. If it was me, you'd have fond the ring long before I actually intended to propose, and then you'd confront me with it and then I'd probably throw it at you and call you an asshole.

That does sound lovely though. The picnic. Even me crying. Happy tears.

I'm glad you get to see some of your old friends! They sound like great people from the stories you've told me about them. Have fun! Don't forget about me.

I like to think you glow in the California sun. Your hair looks more gold and your skin probably tans. I'd look like a lobster. You've seen my moles right? I need like baby sunscreen to be topless.

If I was there with you, you know without a doubt I'd hold you in my

arms and give you whatever you desired. I like it when you let me take care of you.

Love,

-Me

PS: I think you've always been my type too. Why I never worked with anyone else.

PSS: I like the idea of you marrying the fuck out of me.

x-x-x-x—x-x-x-x-x

I didn't even want to respond to you.

Not after THAT.

FUCK man.

How could you?

I trusted you.

I trusted you AFTER Nancy Wheeler. You knew how much it meant for me to open up to you.

I really, really want to fucking hate you. But I fucking can't.

I even told you last month that I thought this would happen. I'm so fucking stupid.

I would think tits and lack of a fucking dick would clue you in on the fact that NO, SHE WASN'T FUCKING ME!!!!

You cried for hours. It's been fucking DAYS for me.

The kids hate you. I don't know why I felt the need to tell you that, but they do.

Even Erica. She said that's not right. She's 9. (I think.)

You're right you don't have a right to ask for forgiveness! What

makes you think I want to forgive you for doing one of things Nancy did to me?

Am I really that fucking pathetic? Two people who claim to love me find comfort in someone else. What does that say about me? I'm bullshit.

I'm fucking BULLSHIT.

Your shit will be in a box out beside the garage. Complete with your shitty fucking heart.

x-x-x-x—x-x-x-x-x

“Maybe you should read it.”

All the commotion around the dining room table stopped at Dustin's words.

I stared at the envelope in his hand.

“We told Max what happened.”

Fucking, Mike.

“Guys, my life isn't Party choices.”

I put my face in my hands and slumped onto the table.

“Steve, I can read it if you want, and let you know if it's worth reading.”

“NO!”

He raised his hands in defense and nodded.

“Okay, but it's an option if you want it.”

“You haven't been privy to a single letter so far, why should this one be any different?”

“Because he hadn't broken your heart before now.”

I forget how much emotion Will can inflect when he speaks.

“Give it here, and let me have a few to myself. I’ll go up to my room.”

They glanced around at each other before nodding as a collective whole.

Dustin handed me the letter and I know my hand shook as I took it.

It burned in my hand as I got to my feet and quickly made my way to my bedroom.

I slumped to the floor the moment my door was closed behind me, my back pressed against the door.

It’s now or never Harrington.

Now or never.

*You really were going to wait for me.*

*You were going to wait until September before heading out, just to see me before you left.*

I could feel my chest constricting and my eyes stinging.

Yes, yes I fucking was. I couldn’t wait to see him again. He’s such a fucking asshole!

I’d made sure to stay after my parents were gone on another one of their trips. The house would’ve been ours for the taking. No disruptions. Just the two of us showing each other how much we missed and loved each other before having to say goodbye, no, see you later.

*I know it’s selfish of me to ask that you read this to the very end, but it’s my last request I’ll ever ask of you.*

*I know I don’t deserve any of your time.*

I threw the letter across the room. Or I tried to. It fluttered and



looped, and fell abruptly one foot from me.

I could feel the tears rolling down my cheeks.

Why am I such a fucking joke?

I glance at the letter and pick it up.

*You're not bullshit. I'm bullshit.*

Fuck you, Billy Hargrove.

Fuck you and your stupid big heart.

Fuck you and your stupid smile that's dopey and just for me.

Fuck your stupidly blue eyes that saw through all my bullshit.

Fuck you and your goddamn love.

*I deserve nothing less than your hatred, and your silence.*

*I will love you for the rest of my days.*

He will too.

He's an asshole, and he's utterly fucked up because of his dad, but he doesn't let that shit interfere with *us*.

He did at the beginning, but that's also because *I* was giving him a hard time. I wasn't sure he was being serious.

I could feel a fresh round of tears roll down my cheeks, and I felt a horrible sob escape.

I never understood how Nance could just be with someone who wasn't me when we loved each other for so long, but when I finally let Billy in, I knew that what she and I had paled in comparison to *us*.

I finally had someone who believed in me and *meant it*.

Someone who listened to my hopes and dreams and didn't belittle me because my thoughts come out a little jumbled sometimes.

He was so tender with me too—like *I* was something precious.

Like, like he actually cares about what I'm thinking. He wants to know the things I *don't* say too.

We had it all planned out too.

*Our* future.

Together.

We'd live in a house, in the suburbs of some big city where we'd have the stupid white picket fence because I'd want a dog, and he'd definitely have his stupid cat. Which I would secretly love because it would love to snuggle in my armpit every night.

And he'd have a stupid frilly apron, and some nights he would just wear the apron, showing off his perfect, perky ass, and doing nothing to hide his excitement when he finally laid eyes on me arriving home.

Am I stupid for still wanting all of that?

I mean, can't I want that with someone who won't break my heart?

It's the last Friday before school starts next week.

I have orientation on Wednesday.

I wipe my tears away and stand up on shaky legs.

I hate this.

That I'm such a fucking mess over a stupid boy; but he's not just a stupid boy—I was going to spend the rest of my life with him—I still want to.

I took a few deep breaths and left the letter on the floor. I'll deal with it later; I have kids to entertain downstairs.

I made my way back to them, they were still seated around the table, eating pizza and bread sticks.

“Hey guys, thanks, and I'm sorry for being such a drama queen.”

They didn't say anything, and only Will looked up at me.

"He's home. They got back Tuesday."

I felt my heart stutter and I could feel my eyes stinging again.

"Why, uh, why didn't you guys invite Max over?"

Dustin choked on his drink.

"We did, but she uh, it's a lot for her, right now."

"But we hung out with her Tuesday night, we all played Monopoly. Oh, it's me, isn't it? I'm sorry guys."

"He goes to your spot each night. Has since they got back on Tuesday; at least that's what Max has told us. He goes out every night."

Mike Wheeler has no filter.

"You can go if you want; we're not going to trash your house buddy. I think it'd be good for you to see him. Talk things through."

X-X-X-X—X-X-X-X-X

I turn down the familiar road that'll take me to the quarry.

It's not like it was just our spot, but it seemed once we deemed it ours, nobody else showed up. Or none that we noticed—then again, we never saw beyond ourselves whenever we were together.

I want to punch him in his stupidly pretty face.

I want to slap him for even thinking, for just a moment, that I'd want to hear about his stupid moment of cheating.

Fuck, he's here.

I'd recognize that blue car anywhere.

I make my way over to where he's parked and pull up on the passenger side.

I park and unbuckle my seatbelt, but I freeze the moment I turn his direction to open my door.

This is the first time I'm *seeing* him since getting the last of his letters.

To be honest, in this moment, right here and now, staring at him through windows, I'm not even mad.

I've missed him. I missed his awful cologne that's grown on me. I miss my fingers getting tangled in his dumb mullet. I missed holding his hand.

I missed the moment when our lips touched and the entire world disappeared down to just the two of us.

I missed feeling just *how much* he loved me with just the brush of his fingertips along my jaw.

I want to scream at him for hurting me worse than Nancy *ever* did. And she'd pulled a gun on me!

I can see him stow something quickly—a piece of paper and a pen. Was he writing me another letter?

Now or never, kid. Now or never.

I quickly climbed out of my car and shut the door behind me and pressed my back against my car.

I could only stare.

My heart was racing and my stomach was in knots.

I felt my palms getting sweaty and itchy.

I could see my vision blurring with unshed tears.

How can he have this much power over me?

I listened as his door opened, and then he was there, standing on the other side of his car, staring right back at me.

I can't do this.

I felt myself slide down the side of my car as tears fell.

“I really want to fucking *hate* you, but I, I *can't*. I FUCKING CAN'T!!”

I didn't realize he moved until I felt his hands cradling my head, thumbs wiping at my tears.

I looked at him and realized he was crying too. God his eyes were so blue.

“I, I'm so sorry. I'm sorry, so fucking sorry.”

I fisted his stupid denim jacket in my hands as he continued to rub my cheeks with his thumbs.

I wanted to shove him away just as much as I wanted him close and in my space like this.

“I, I wanted to leave. All my stuff's already in my dorm. I don't, I don't even know why I'm here. I shouldn't be.”

He choked back a sob.

“What happened? I need to hear it from you. You owe me the truth.”

He closed his eyes and removed his hands from my face and grasped at my wrists.

“I, uh, it, it was so easy, *so fucking easy* to just fall back into old habits with my old friends. I'd gotten too shitfaced before I mentioned that I had someone waiting back here, and then, one of 'em brought out coke, and I thought why not, for old time's sake, and ended up doing like three lines. More people showed up, and I meant it when I said I thought she was you. She wore a stupid polo shirt and had these stupid chino looking pants on, and her hair, smelled just like yours.”

I kept my eyes on his face—his were closed still, tears still slipping down his cheeks.

“I'd, I didn't realize until I woke up the next morning what I'd done. I, uh, I haven't touched anything since then either. I woke up

wrapped around her, and I was still a little foggy but I went the bathroom and when I came back in the room that's when my brain woke up. I took in the clothes all over the room, the bra, the pink panties, and the fact that the brunette in the bed had tits and no dick. In my inebriated state the night before it was *so easy* for my brain to believe you were there with me. I'm pretty sure I kept calling her Steve."

I pulled my hands back and crossed my arms over my chest, pulling me knees up close to my chest as well.

He settled back on his knees fully, and finally opened his eyes.

He opened his mouth to say something but I shook my head and he quickly clamped his mouth shut.

"I didn't read your last letter until a few hours ago. It's Friday, the kids are still at my house. They convinced me to come see you. You knew, *you knew* how much it means for me to let you in and give you my heart. I told you about Nancy, and then, then you go and do the same thing, the *same* fucking bullshit *thing* she did. But unlike her, you didn't tell me that our love was bullshit. You said *you* were bullshit."

I broke eye contact and thumped my head back against my door.

"God, Billy, I, I had a plan for the night you came back. My parents are already gone, no use sticking around any longer because I wasn't going to be home when they finally decided to come back. The house was going to be empty, and I was going to show you just how much I missed you in *every single room*. Instead I played Monopoly with your kid sister and the Party because I couldn't face you. I had every intention to be gone before you came back. I really did."

"Can, can we, is, how can I make this right? You, *Steve*, you are the best thing to ever happen in my life."

I let out a broken laugh.

"That's fucking rich, the best thing to happen in your life, but you, you can *fuck* some random chick when your high and drunk out of

your goddamn mind, and what, you, you, you think that, that saying sorry is going *fix* this?"

I looked back at him and he averted his gaze.

He ran his hands through his hair, a nervous tick of his, and finally looked me in the eye again. I don't think he's stopped crying.

"*I love you* and that's not going to change just because you fucking hate my guts. You came *here*. You *stayed*. Why?"

"If you're hoping I tell you I forgive you, you'll be waiting forever."

"I'm not going to fight you. You can beat the shit out of me right now and I won't stop you. Shit, it's the least I deserve."

I felt his hand on my knee. It burned, like my body knew I'd been craving his touch. I didn't shake him off.

"I really, really, really, really wanted to punch you in the face. Slap you too, but that's not going to solve how I feel. You made me feel like I was *bullshit*. Like, like I will forever be some kind of stupid idiot who falls for people who will *never* love him like he does. Like I will *never* be *good enough* for someone to *stick around* long term because the, the first two people I've ever loved, *both* of you cheated on me.

"I mean Nance was already checked out of our relationship before that stupid party, and I should've trusted my gut when it came to seeing her with Jonathon, but I, I guess I am just too stupid to realize I love too much, too easily, and people just can't handle that. And both of you, she was *drunk*, you were drunk and *high*, and then I started to think, maybe, maybe there's something wrong with me, like once you guys were intoxicated on some level, your minds realized that, that I am a worthless piece of shit and I really am *bullshit*.

"You physically cheated on me, she did emotionally. It's still all fucked up, and maybe I shouldn't have let you in so soon after. I mean it'd been almost a year since we broke up, and I kept telling you I thought you were joking. You beat the shit out of me, what else was I supposed to think of this turn around in behavior towards me?"

“And fuck, I, I stayed and came, and am delaying going off to college because I’m afraid that admitting my one fear, that I kept telling you about in those letters, that you kept reassuring me *wouldn’t happen*, happened. That maybe, just because you tell me you love me, it doesn’t mean you’re *in* love with me, and I don’t, I don’t think I could handle that, not coming from *you*.

“Because despite all of this, everything, I still fucking love you, so much. I’m still in love with you, and I don’t know if that will ever change.”

I watched as his other hand slowly moved towards my face, cupping the side of my head so his thumb could rub along my cheeks, still wet with tears.

“Sweetheart, I meant it when I told you, repeatedly, that you are it for me. I will love you until the end of time. I, if you need me to walk away from you and never speak to you again, *I will*, but know that I will be out there loving you for all that you are, all that you do, and hoping someone will be worthy of you, your love, and your heart. You’ve always been too good for me. I’m the lucky one because *you* chose to love *me*.”

I unfolded my arms and reached out for him.

“Don’t, you *can’t*, please *don’t*, don’t ask me to tell you to walk away.”

“I could never. I’m too selfish. I, I know I fucked up darling, and I will spend the rest of my life making it up to you if you’ll let me. I’ll do nothing but focus on my school work this upcoming year, and get a job so I can, I can take care of you while you’re going to school.”

We’d moved our bodies without even realizing, my legs stretched out, him kneeling, straddling them, with both of his hands cupping my head, my hands clenched on the open edges of his shirt, and our foreheads pressed together.

I closed my eyes and felt a fresh round of tears start falling, but these weren’t because I was hurting, these felt like *relief*. They came with a feeling of *hope* that we could eventually *fix* this fucked up mess.



“Kiss me. Kiss me like you mean it, and like you’ll never kiss anyone else but me.”

I felt him nod.

I felt his touch change, as if I became something revered to him.

Then, and only then, did he press forward and touch his lips to mine.

His fingertips left a trail of revered touches along my jaw line, down my neck, and as they trailed down my chest, before he maneuvered us so he could put his arms around me. My own hands scrambled for purchase on him, one pressing against his exposed chest as the other moved upwards to grasp at the back of his neck, getting tangled in his hair.

I allowed his kiss to devour me.

I *needed* him to.

I *needed* him to *show me* how much *I* meant to *him*.

It was as if he was pouring all of his promises from those letters in each press of lips against mine.

He pulled back first, gasping for breath a few minutes later—arms still around me, holding me close, our foreheads pressed together once again.

“I kissed every letter before I sent it, even, even *that* one.”

“Were you writing me another letter when I pulled up?”

I could feel the heat of his face flushing.

“Yes.”

I felt myself smiling.

I wasn’t happy per se, but I could tell that we were going to be *okay*. We were going to be able to *move on* from this, and just maybe, he’d get me out to California and take me to the place he found where he

wanted to give me his mother's ring.